

July 18, 2016

Dear Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Committee on the Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley, and Senate Committee on the Judiciary Ranking Member Patrick Leahy:

The undersigned lawyers have all served as heads of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Collectively, our service spans multiple Presidential administrations, both Democratic and Republican. We strongly support Chief Judge Merrick B. Garland's confirmation as a Supreme Court Justice because we are certain that he fully understands the role of the Justice Department and the courts in ensuring the fulfillment of this nation's commitment to civil rights.

Chief Judge Garland served in the Justice Department in multiple administrations. He has personally wrestled with the difficult questions that arise in government prosecutions. He knows first-hand how the Department seeks to rigorously assess the law and the facts before deciding to take action on an issue. In addition, of course, he has served for 19 years on the D.C. Circuit, the court that most regularly and closely reviews the conduct of the federal government. His unparalleled experience assures that, as a Supreme Court Justice, he will review the Justice Department's actions in civil rights and other areas carefully and fairly. He will understand and respect the Department's mission, while at the same time holding it to the highest standards.

Rigor, fairness, and thoughtfulness have been the hallmarks of Chief Judge Garland's time on the D.C. Circuit. On balance, his decisions seem to favor neither defense nor plaintiff, neither government nor private, neither progressive nor conservative. His fidelity is to the law, not to any particular community, substantive issue, or set of outcomes. He also was a consensus builder on a court that had a reputation for being fractious, and would bring this valuable set of skills to the high court.

The Civil Rights division is charged with enforcement of our civil rights laws, critical tools that the government relies on to keep people from harm. Garland's judicial restraint, and his proper deference both to Congress and to executive interpretation of federal legislation, generally meant that our work could be carried out in a manner that protected the American people. If you care deeply about civil rights, then you have to care deeply about Merrick Garland and his promise for our nation.

In brief, Chief Judge Garland's record on the bench and as a Department of Justice lawyer demonstrates that he is superbly qualified to serve on the Supreme Court. We urge that he be confirmed.

Respectfully,

Wan J. Kim (Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, 2005--2007)

Bill Lann Lee (Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, 1997--2001)

Deval L. Patrick (Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, 1994--1997)

Thomas E. Perez (Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, 2009--2013)